

Chicago as an Indian Town

“Although every Indian town carried a tribal identity, the resident population included people connected with other tribes. They may have come to live in the village because of marriage alliances made during a trading visit. . . . Some were captives or slaves acquired during inter-tribal wars. There were frequently people of European and African heritage captured as children or adults. . . .

“Indian villages were the recognized home bases for their inhabitants, yet, unlike white settlements, were seldom fully occupied during the entire year. In the northern Great Lakes region, . . . the major fishing sites were the places regularly occupied during the spring to fall period of tolerable weather. To the

south, . . . villages had their maximum population during the summer planting and harvesting seasons. . . . The village customarily split into smaller groups to depart for winter hunting camps, then moved to maple groves for sugar making in the early spring and often took in a short-term spring fish run before returning to plant corn and other vegetables and visit a major trading center. In mid-winter, an Indian village site might be entirely vacant or house only elderly people left behind with dried food supplies to serve as general caretakers during the four-month winter hunting season.”

From Helen Hornbeck Tanner, *Atlas of Great Lakes Indian History*, 4–5

1795

Kentucky appropriates \$2,000 to extend Wilderness Road from Crab Orchard to Cumberland Gap; Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason* U.S. bestseller

January: Naturalization Act requires five years residence for U.S. citizenship

June: Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation between United States and Britain ratified

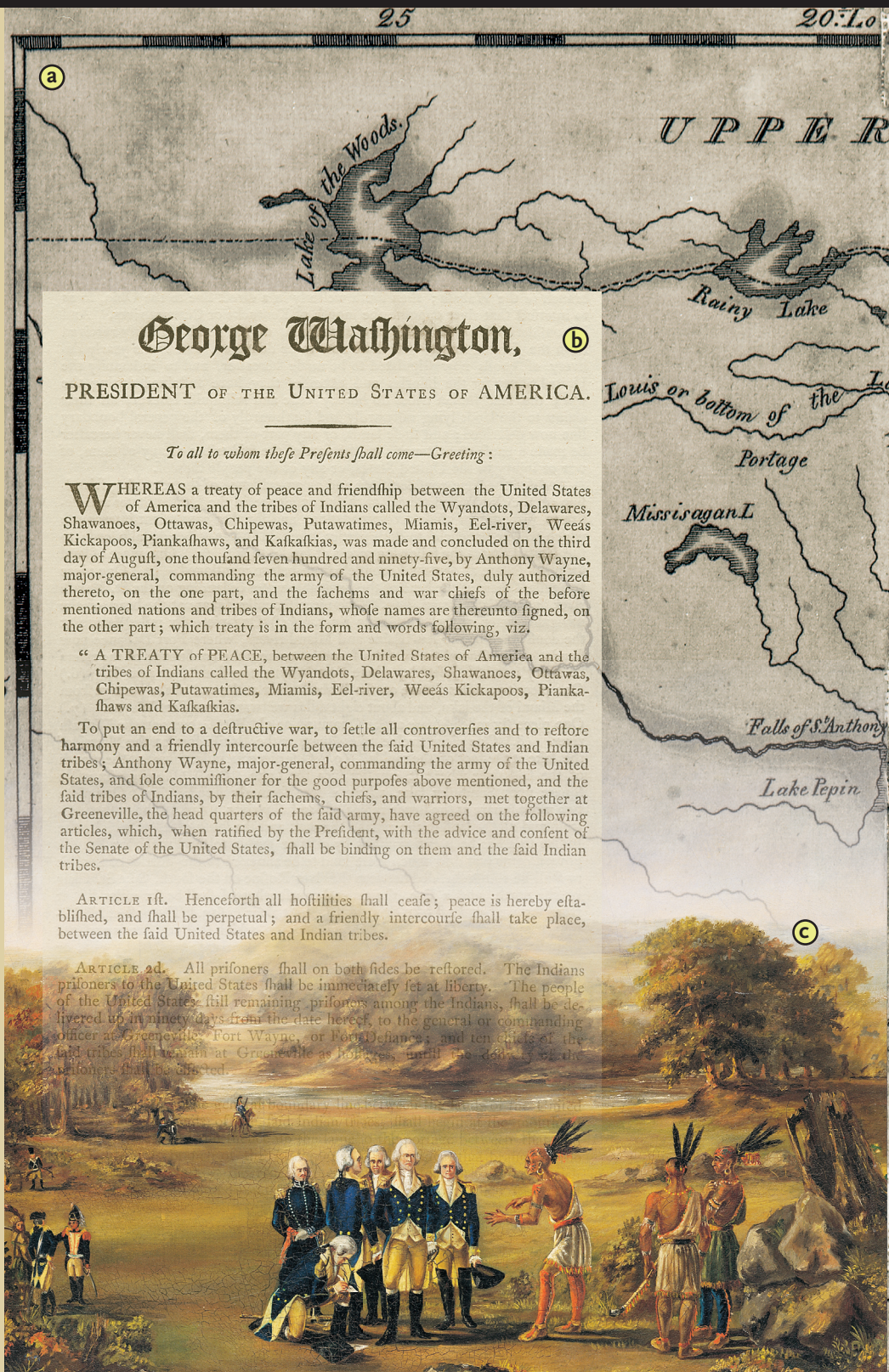
(a) *Background:* Between the 1673 journey of Jolliet and Marquette and 1763, the French exerted colonial influence in the Illinois Country, an area that connected France's Canadian province with Louisiana, and that is shown in this geographically inaccurate 1795 map. At the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763, France surrendered all of its North American claims. Britain had conquered Canada; Spain received Louisiana. The Illinois Country, although nominally part of Britain's holdings, was far from its control, except through the influence it exerted through the fur trade. As part of the 1795 Greenville Treaty, the American government took land at sixteen strategic locations, including Chicago. Not until the end of the War of 1812, however, did the government begin to exert control over the region that would become Chicago.

(b) The Greenville Treaty set into motion a process which led DuSable to sell his Chicago holdings. Until then, Indian treaties with Great Britain and the United States had set the Ohio River as the boundary between areas of white and Indian settlement. Following Anthony Wayne's 1794 victory at the Battle of Fallen Timbers, Indians ceded over two-thirds of southern and eastern Ohio. In addition, they ceded “one piece of land six miles square at the mouth of the Chikago river, emptying into the south-west end of Lake Michigan, where a fort formerly stood.” Within a decade, Fort Dearborn had been established.

(c) Chicago was on the periphery of the American empire, and decisions important to it were made far away. In this contemporary painting, the American military and Indians negotiate the Treaty of Greenville in Ohio.

(d) Despite this crude rendering, Jean Baptiste and Catherine Point DuSable had a considerable establishment on the north side of the main branch of the Chicago River just west of Lake Michigan. When sold in 1800, it included a 40-by-22-foot wood house, one horse mill, a pair of millstones, a bake house, tools, furniture, household goods, and livestock. —From A. T. Andreas, *History of Cook County*, 1884

(e)-(f) Exchanges between colonial powers and Native Americans included both trade items and culture. The DuSables were Roman Catholic, and the brass holy water font inscribed 1752 is among the very few religious objects recovered from eighteenth-century Chicago (discovered during the 1898 excavations for the Halsted Street Bridge). Native Americans exchanged furs for blankets, pots, and other metal objects, including items like this silver brooch, ca. 1799–1800 by Robert Cruickshank of Montreal and recovered at Chicago. Collections of the Chicago Historical Society.



DuSable: A Regional Man

Jean Baptiste Point DuSable was a “free Negro,” born into the French colonial empire in North America in the mid-eighteenth century. Questions about where he was born remain, but it is clear that by the 1770s DuSable was trading with partners who had connections in Montreal, Kaskaskia, and Cahokia. Historical records place DuSable as a trader at Michigan City in 1779, as a British prisoner at Fort Michilimackinac, and then as the British-appointed manager of a trading post north of Detroit in 1780.

DuSable negotiated between the colonial powers and the Potawatomi, Miami, and Chippewa with whom he traded. His wife, Catherine, was a Pot-

awatomi whose family connections were important to this trade. By 1788, the couple had established a home at Chicago. They solemnized their marriage at a Roman Catholic church in Peoria (1788), and saw the marriage of their daughter Suzanne to Jean Baptiste Pelletier, and the birth of their granddaughter Eulalie (1790).

Sometime before 1800, Catherine died. DuSable sold his considerable holdings at Chicago and moved south to St. Charles, Missouri, where he died in 1818.

Ann Durkin Keating and Helen Hornbeck Tanner

August: Treaty of Greenville

September: Connecticut Land Company organized; purchases Western Reserve lands (now in Ohio)

October: U.S. gains rights on Mississippi River. Vancouver returns from four-year voyage mapping North American Pacific Coast

November: Future U.S. President James K. Polk born.

